

April 2021

FOCUS *magazine*



 NEBRASKA
CANCER
SPECIALISTS

3 SURVIVOR
STORIES TO
INSPIRE YOU



NebraskaCancer.com

Letter from THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

As Spring 2021 comes around, many of us find ourselves remembering a year ago and how our lives were forever changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For some of us, this meant adapting to different work environments and school schedules, for others it was a more organized home, memorizing the local take-out menus and enjoying the simplicity of slowing down.

But I think for most of us, this time enabled us to find a new sense of “community”. A requisite for being part of a community is participation and communication.

In this issue, you will find people just like you who, in the midst of unprecedented times, chose to share their stories. There are those who battled through heartache and tough times, others who leaped to the opportunity to grow and flourish. This issue also features some exciting news about our outpatient pharmacy as well as an overview of our new DigniCap® scalp cooling treatment which reduces hair loss during chemotherapy.

With sunshine, blooms, and warmer weather ahead of us, it’s an honor to highlight the beauty and courage of some inspiring individuals and services in our community.

Now more than ever we need each other. At NCS, we remain a safe place for those who need us and continue to provide compassionate care, cutting-edge treatments in a safe and pleasant environment.

I am welcoming this spring with wide open arms, I hope you do too.

Enjoy!

Kelly



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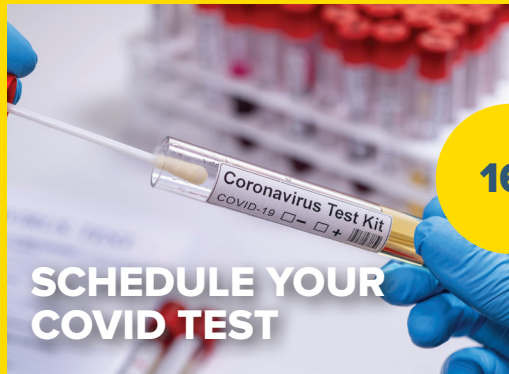
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Listen to our podcast on NebraskaCancer.com/podcasts

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CONVENIENT COMMUNITY CANCER CARE

Midwest Cancer Center - Legacy
17201 Wright Street, Suite 200, Omaha, NE 68130

Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center
8303 Dodge Street, Suite 250, Omaha, NE 68114

Henry Lynch Cancer Center - Bergan
7500 Mercy Road, Suite 1300, Omaha, NE 68124

Midwest Cancer Center - Papillion
611 Fenwick Drive, Papillion, NE 68046

Methodist Fremont Health
450 East 23rd Street, Fremont, NE 68025

Think Whole Person Healthcare
7100 West Center Road, Omaha, NE 68106

Pender Community Hospital
100 Hospital Drive, Pender, NE 68047

Franciscan Care Services - West Point
30 N Monitor Street, West Point, NE 68788

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Locations
TO SERVE YOU



NCS SPECIALTY *Pharmacy*

AWARDED **DISTINCTION**
IN ONCOLOGY



Outpatient Pharmacists Michael Brodersen, PharmD, BCOP and Kelly Hotaling, PharmD

Nebraska Cancer Specialists (NCS) is proud to announce it has been awarded Specialty Pharmacy Accreditation with Distinction in Oncology by the Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC). By earning this accreditation, NCS joins an elite, limited group of specialty pharmacies who have been recognized by ACHC for providing cancer patients with exceptional and quality care.

The ACHC Specialty Pharmacy Accreditation with Distinction in Oncology recognizes specialty pharmacies who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to ensuring cancer patients receive oral cancer drugs and ancillary oral therapies in a safe, reliable, accessible, and affordable environment that is integrated with their overall plan of care. Achieving ACHC Specialty Pharmacy Accreditation with Distinction in Oncology validates Nebraska Cancer Specialists' achievement in meeting and exceeding the highest standards of quality in the delivery of compassionate, personalized cancer care for patients.

"Achieving this accreditation demonstrates our commitment to providing NCS patients with the highest level of pharmaceutical care. Our ability to meet and exceed ACHC standards, as well as receiving our certification of distinction in oncology, provides proof that our staff is dedicated to serving oncology/hematology patients requiring highly specialized therapies. This is yet another service we are proud to provide to our patients," said Michael Brodersen, PharmD, BCOP Nebraska Cancer Specialists' Outpatient Pharmacy Manager.

ACHC is a nonprofit organization that has stood as a symbol of quality and excellence since 1986. The accreditation by ACHC reflects an organization's dedication and commitment to meeting quality standards that facilitate a higher level of performance and patient care. For more information about ACHC, visit www.achc.org.



Read more at NebraskaCancer.com

Reduce hair loss
while taking
Chemotherapy!
All smiles!



**NCS IS THE 1ST IN THE REGION TO OFFER
DIGNICAP® SCALP COOLING SYSTEM**

Nebraska Cancer Specialists has invested in DigniCap®, a proven approach to reduce chemotherapy-induced hair loss, helping patients maintain privacy, self-esteem and control during a critical period of treatment. The DigniCap® Scalp Cooling System minimizes hair loss from certain chemotherapy treatments for men and women with solid tumor cancers such as those associated with breast, prostate, ovarian, uterine, and other tissues.

The DigniCap® Scalp Cooling System is FDA cleared, safe, effective and clinically proven.

Why Scalp Cooling?

Hair loss can be one of the most devastating side effects of chemotherapy and can negatively affect self-image, confidence and overall well-being during treatment.

By using DigniCap® to save your hair, you can maintain privacy, identity and a sense of control during treatment.

How it Works

Reduced temperature to your scalp causes the hair follicles to narrow and cell activity in the

area to slow down. This results in decreased blood flow to the scalp so that less chemotherapy reaches the hair follicles.

What Happens During Treatment?

Scalp cooling must be used at every chemotherapy session to be effective. The caps will be fitted prior to treatment and connected to the DigniCap® device.

Does it work?

In 2015, DigniCap® was the first scalp cooling device to receive FDA clearance after completing a rigorous clinical trial in which 66% of patients kept the majority of their hair.

Will I still need a wig?

The goal of scalp cooling is to reduce overall hair loss so that a wig, cap, scarf or other head covering is **not needed**.

**For more information visit
NebraskaCancer.com/DigniCap**

Candace's Aha Moment

“CANCER IS OVERWHELMING. SEEING A COUNSELOR WAS ONE OF THE BEST THINGS FOR ME.”

NOT LIKE EVERY OTHER YEAR

For Candace Purvis, going in for her annual physical and mammogram was as much a part of September as her birthday celebration and her son's football games.

But last fall, “I almost didn't go,” she said of the mammogram appointment. Her 15-year routine won out, however, and other than slightly more people in the waiting room than usual, the appointment was like every other year. Until it wasn't.

“Normally, every year when I go, I leave there with my results,” she said. But this time, the physician took extra time examining the images and she was asked to return for an ultrasound. Ultimately, a biopsy confirmed a diagnosis of Stage 1A breast cancer.

COMPREHENSIVE CARE

After her initial surgery and a lumpectomy, Candace's surgeon referred her to Dr. Mary Wells, a Medical Oncologist at Nebraska Cancer Specialists. Dr. Wells recommended a regimen of two rounds of chemotherapy followed by radiation.

“I remember being upset,” Candace said, “and wondering why I had to

have chemotherapy if the tumor was already out?” Her answer came when a specialized test done at NCS showed a high potential for Candace's cancer to return. “We went over those numbers,” she said, “and with the additional therapies, the percentage (for recurrence) went down, from 25% to less than 10%.”

“THE BEST THING I'VE DONE”

Although Candace was moving ahead with her physical care, the shock of having cancer was creating anxiety and disrupting her sleep. Her husband and adult sons were supportive, but often the family didn't know what to say or do.

“I remember being upset,” Candace said, “and wondering why I had to have chemotherapy if the tumor was already out.”

When Dr. Wells recommended Candace consider mental health counseling services, Candace at first rejected the idea. “I thought at the time I could handle it, but the next time I saw her, I reconsidered and said ‘let's give it a shot. It can't hurt.’”

Photo of Candace and her mom, who had mammogram appointment the same morning that Candace did. Candace actually called her mom on the way to her appointment and that was one of the reasons she got herself there that day.



After her first meeting with Lori Wingerter, LIMHP, MA, Candace found relief. “We hit it off right away,” she said of her sessions with Lori, which have involved therapeutic talk, imagery exercises, meditation techniques and breathing skills designed to help Candace relax. Combining the mental health support with her strong faith and spiritual life, Candace found a positive way forward.



Candace (on right) with her NCS Mental Health Counselor, Lori Wingerter, LIMHP, MA.

“NOW, I DON'T PUT ANYTHING OFF”

In addition to asking for help and taking advantage of it when offered, Candace hopes that other patients facing a cancer diagnosis “live every day the best that you can.”

While she's looking forward to completing her treatment, the 53-year-old wife, mother, daughter and office manager knows she won't even think of putting anything off. “I have to continue to go for my mammograms in September,” she said of the screening that caught her cancer in its earliest stages. “That is not going to stop.”

Kristi's Journey:

“THE NCS TEAM IS ALWAYS PROACTIVE AND LOOKING AHEAD”

“Dr. Block called me the day before Thanksgiving,” Kristi recalled, “to start me on an antibiotic because she felt it was important to not wait.”

I THOUGHT I HAD A GALLBLADDER ISSUE

When Kristi Strohmyer traveled from her Gothenburg, Nebraska home to have surgery in Kearney last summer, she really hoped that removing her gallbladder would eliminate the pain she'd been experiencing.

“But it didn't go away,” Kristi said. When the gastrointestinal specialist looked again, he found a tumor estimated at 7 centimeters and immediately referred Kristi to a pancreatic specialist in Omaha.

Kristi and her husband, a retired dentist, drove 350 miles to meet with the specialists. After additional tests determined that Kristi's cancer had metastasized to her lymph nodes, Kristi was referred to Dr. Margaret Block, Medical Oncologist at Nebraska Cancer Specialists.

“At that point, when it metastasizes, I found out that you are no longer a surgical candidate,” Kristi explained, recalling that she and her husband found a way forward through one of the 100-plus clinical trials active and available at NCS.

CONTINUING CHEMO AT HOME

The trial treatment caused the tumor in Kristi's pancreas to shrink significantly and

also reduced the tumor markers, which signal the presence of cancer, by a factor of 10.

Kristi has continued regular trips for treatment and visits with the NCS team. She has also been able to receive some care without leaving her central Nebraska hometown.

“I like Omaha. Traveling there is not a big deal – in fact, my son lives there,” she said. “But we are lucky to have an oncology nurse in our local hospital,” Kristi said. “He was able to handle my (infusion) pump, give me fluids and take care of any other needs that I might have with Dr. Block's consent.”

I HAVE A GREAT SUPPORT SYSTEM

As she has navigated life-altering changes in her health over the past year, Kristi has relied on both the team at NCS and those in her family circle. “I feel really comfortable with my care,” she said, noting that she's especially grateful that the NCS professionals have been so responsive.

“Dr. Block called me the day before Thanksgiving,” Kristi recalled, “to start me on an antibiotic because she felt it was important to not wait.”

More recently, Kristi met with the one of the Certified Oncology Dietitians at NCS to find foods that work well with her treatment and that help her maintain a healthy weight.

THERE ARE ALWAYS NEW THINGS

Kristi continues to “take things day by day” and base her activity on her energy level. “I've just acknowledged that I cannot do everything. My family understands and helps when I need to adjust.”

Happily, Kristi still participates in activities that are meaningful to her. Whether that means golfing a few holes with her husband, walking outside with her daughter who lives nearby, or heading into town to do some safe and socially distant shopping, she appreciates it all.

Because she knows that still, cancer or not, “there are a lot of things I can do.”



Trichel's Perspective:

“THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW TO TRY”

FIRST DIAGNOSED IN 2002

“I was just shy of my 41st birthday when I found out I had breast cancer,” said Omahan Trichel Jorgensen. Her initial treatment plan included surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, “but the biopsy indicated there was a high chance the cancer might come back.”

In 2004, the cancer returned. “Several lesions popped up on my spine,” Trichel recounted. “That’s when I was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer.”

FINDING THE RIGHT TREATMENT

“I had chemo again,” Trichel said, “and fortunately, those lesions became stable.”

Continuing under the expert care of Dr. Margaret Block and the team at Nebraska Cancer Specialists, Trichel received chemotherapy and medications to manage her condition.

Trichel’s maintenance program shifted in 2009 when regular scans showed the presence of another cancerous lesion, this time on the socket of her hip bone. “We did some radiation and the changed the regimen,” she explained.

THINGS DON'T STAY THE SAME

To keep the new lesion and her overall condition in check, Trichel remains in active treatment. In part, because she knows from experience that cancer treatments and medications continue to improve and become more effective.

“An example is the drug Herceptin,” she said. “You hear a lot about it today and a lot of people are taking it. Back in 2002, when I was initially diagnosed, it was still in a trial phase.”

Even today, 19 years after Trichel’s initial diagnosis, new treatments are still becoming available.



“I was just shy of my 41st birthday when I found out I had breast cancer.”

BUILDING HER OWN WAY FORWARD

Throughout nearly two decades of cancer treatment, Trichel has found incredible support from her husband, her mother, her daughter – who just got married last year – as well as from her Nebraska Cancer Specialists family. “NCS is like a second home. They are a part of my life.”

The other person who has played an essential role in her journey is none other than Trichel herself. She advises every patient to “be your own advocate. You know what you need to do, and you can be the one to do something.”

As she and her husband get close to completing a home remodel, she sees so much ahead. Frequent golf games at Oak Hills, visits with her mom here and in Texas, new books to read. “Cancer,” Trichel said, “is not going to keep me down.”

Top left – Participating with her husband in “Race for the Cure” 2018.

Middle left – Trichel with her mom on a “girls trip” to Hawaii in February 2020 (before the world shut down!).

Bottom left – Trichel and her daughter at her bachelorette party in Fall of 2020.



HELLO
MY NAME IS

GET TO KNOW *Dr. Joel Michalski*

"I am proud to have been born and raised in Nebraska and completed all of my education at University of Nebraska Medical Center. I have a strong interest in how the immune system interacts with cancer, and how those interactions can be utilized to treat many cancers. The fields of hematology and oncology are complex, and I'm committed to providing the best, high quality care that modern medicine has to offer, along with a sincere desire to treat people, not just a disease. I learned at an early age that hard work is the currency of success. I applied that principle over many years of training and strive to provide that for every one of my patients."

Dr. Michalski's first career path did not include medicine, but along the way of other endeavors, he rediscovered his passion for science and helping people:

- He played amateur football during his education
- He was the first MD/PHD scholar at UNMC to complete their PhD in three years
- Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his wife and kids
- He likes to lift weights and build cabinetry and furniture
- He has owned a Nissan 300ZX for over 20 years and busts it out when the weather allows

You can visit Dr. Michalski at Midwest Cancer Center-Legacy, Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center, and Think Whole Person Healthcare.

Nebraska Cancer Specialists



GAVE 5 AREA NON-PROFITS AN EXTRA *Holiday Donation*



Five area non-profits received a \$1000 donation for helping local cancer patients in need.

The NCS HOPE Foundation, a local nonprofit providing assistance to cancer patients, family members, and caregivers, was excited to give five area non-profits an extra gift last year. It was the first year the foundation ran their Holiday HOPE Campaign aimed to help cancer patients in need this past holiday season.

"Sometimes asking is the hardest part. We know people all over the world are struggling, especially in 2020 due to the pandemic. Our board got together and we knew we wanted to help. We agreed the holiday giving campaign was exactly what we wanted to do during the holiday season for our community and the surrounding areas," said Danielle Geiger, President of NCS HOPE Foundation.

The board voted on five local non-profits who also help cancer patients and their families. The organizations chosen were A Time to Heal, Angels Among Us, For the Girls, My Sister's Keeper, and Project Pink'd.

Each organization received a \$1000 holiday donation.

"We are fortunate to be able to provide financial assistance to those in need and bring a smile to their faces."

The Holiday HOPE Giving Campaign came just a few weeks after their Thanksgiving Giveaway. The foundation gave 25 \$100 pre-paid gift cards away to patients and families in need who were nominated by their loved ones, and another 50 \$100 gift cards to patients selected by their nurses and physicians.

"We are fortunate to be able to provide financial assistance to those in need and bring a smile to their faces. We live in a very generous community and we have no doubt the organizations we donated to this year will put the funds to good use," said Cliff McEvoy, Vice President of NCS HOPE Foundation.



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NebraskaCancer.com!



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